

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification as follows. Insertions are shown underlined while deletions are ~~struck through~~.

Paragraph beginning at page 2, line 15 of the specification:

1-) A process for producing a porous metal body, ~~comprising~~ comprises the steps of:

(1) maintaining under reduced pressure a raw metal material within a temperature range from room temperature to a temperature lower than the melting point of the metal in a sealed vessel to thereby degas the raw metal material;

(2) melting the raw metal material under pressurization by introducing a gas into the sealed vessel to thereby dissolve the gas in the molten metal; and

(3) cooling and solidifying the molten metal in a mold while controlling the gas pressure and the temperature of the molten metal inside the sealed vessel to thereby obtain the porous metal body.

Paragraph beginning at page 3, line 3 of the specification:

2-) In The process for producing a porous metal body according to item 1) above, ~~wherein~~ the metal is selected from the group consisting of iron, copper, nickel, cobalt, magnesium, titanium, chromium, tungsten, manganese, molybdenum, beryllium, and alloys comprising one or more of these metals.

Paragraph beginning at page 3, line 9 of the specification:

3-) In The process for producing a porous metal body according to item 1) above, ~~wherein~~ the reduced pressure in step (1) is 10^{-1} Torr or lower.

Paragraph beginning at page 3, line 12 of the specification:

4-) In The process for producing a porous metal body according to item 3) above, ~~wherein~~ the reduced pressure in step (1) is between 10^{-1} and 10^{-6} Torr.

Paragraph beginning at page 3, line 15 of the specification:

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5-) ~~In The~~the process for producing a porous metal body according to item 1) above, ~~wherein~~ the metal material in step (1) is maintained at a temperature which is 50 to 200°C lower than the melting point of the metal.

Paragraph beginning at page 3, line 19 of the specification:

6-) ~~In The~~the process for producing a porous metal body according to item 1) above, ~~wherein~~ the gas used in steps (2) and (3) is at least one member selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, nitrogen, argon and helium.

Paragraph beginning at page 3, line 23 of the specification:

7-) ~~In The~~the process for producing a porous metal body according to item 1) above, ~~wherein~~ the pressure applied in step (2) is between 0.1 and 10 MPa.

Paragraph beginning at page 4, line 1 of the specification:

8-) ~~In The~~the process for producing a porous metal body according to item 7) above, ~~wherein~~ the pressure applied in step (2) is between 0.2 and 2.5 MPa.

Paragraph beginning at page 4, line 4 of the specification:

9-) ~~In The~~the process for producing a porous metal body according to item 1) above, ~~wherein~~ the molten metal is poured in step (3) from the sealed vessel into the mold equipped with a cooling apparatus.

Paragraph beginning at page 4, line 8 of the specification:

10-) ~~In The~~the process for producing a porous metal body according to item 1) above, ~~wherein~~ the cooling and solidification of the molten metal in step (3) is performed by a continuous casting method.

Paragraph beginning at page 4, line 20 of the specification:

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Fig. 3 is a conceptual diagram showing the gas-dissolving characteristics of the solid and liquid phases in the cooling and solidifying step of the molten metal in which gas has been ~~melted~~dissolved.

Paragraph beginning at page 22, line 5 of the specification:

The apparatus shown in Fig. 11 has ~~the~~a raw metal material heating and melting section 1 and ~~the~~a molten metal holding section ~~22~~22 disposed one above the other, and a continuous casting apparatus is linked in the lateral direction to the molten metal holding section ~~22~~22. The degassing and melting of the raw metal material in the raw metal material heating and melting section 1 are performed in the same manner as with the apparatus shown in Fig. 8.

Paragraph beginning at page 22, line 13 of the specification:

Next, the stopper 8 is lifted and the molten metal 3-a in which the gas has been dissolved is poured through a molten metal inlet 11 into a melt holding container 19 located at the bottom of ~~at~~the molten metal ~~holder~~holding section 22. Before the molten metal is poured into the melt holding container 19, a vacuum pump (not shown) is actuated to purge the gas through the degassing pipe 31 to thereby reduce the pressure inside the molten metal ~~cooling and solidifying~~holding section 22, after which a given gas is introduced through a gas supply pipe 17 to maintain the inside at a given pressure. The gas pressure inside the molten metal ~~cooling and solidifying~~holding section 22 can be easily controlled by suitably opening or closing the gas supply pipe 17 and a gas exhaust pipe 18. The molten metal that has been poured into the melt holding container 19 is maintained at a given temperature by a heater 20.

IN THE ABSTRACT:

Please replace the abstract (page 39) with the attached substitute abstract having the same page number.